

Mayor Mike Winder

State of the City Address 2011

West Valley City, Utah

West Valley City is Open for Business!

Members of the City Council, residents, executive staff, city employees:

It is an honor to stand before you as your mayor to share a few words this evening about the state of our city. It has been an exciting year since our city's first State of the City address was given in these chambers twelve months ago. Our city has met significant challenges, and is poised to engage more. I am profoundly grateful to be involved in this team effort with a passionate, visionary, and capable City Council, with city manager Wayne Pyle (the best in the state), and with a very remarkable city staff.

As promised a year ago, our city government has reached out in more ways than ever to communicate and receive feedback from our constituents. WVC-TV was launched on Comcast's Channel 17, the city website, and YouTube. An online service request tracker debuted to receive requests for public works and code enforcement needs. A professional survey of our residents gauged opinions, as did online surveys from our website. Our city is now using Facebook and Twitter to inform residents of events and news of our city. "Milk with the Mayor" was launched as a monthly open door meeting, the monthly Mayor's Video Report started, and summits were held with ethnic, education, and religious leaders. In fact, these summits were so successful, that the participants have asked that we continue to meet, and even asked to meet together. I therefore plan to reconvene all of these groups together in 2011 for two West Valley City Leadership Summits. We will hold one in May and one in November, and we will also invite neighborhood association chairs, members of city committees, legislators from our area, and other leaders to these mornings of discussion, problem solving and collaboration.

One of the ways we are coming together as a city is uniting behind a common language. The US Census released just this morning the fact the 31% of West Valley City homes speak a language other than English at home. The West Valley City English Initiative embraces diversity, encourages the learning of multiple languages, but strongly requests that all residents learn English as quickly as possible. This effort has been very well received. In fact, Granite Peaks'

English program taught after hours at Granger High School had 102 students sign up the day after we launched the initiative! We plan to recognize students who complete a series of English classes with a certificate at City Council meetings in April and October.

Among the tremendous feedback received after we announced the initiative was an email from Susan Vogel, who was a volunteer with the English Skills Learning Center tutoring immigrants for two years in a housing complex in our city. Susan mentioned how difficult it was for her students to practice their English in public because of the fear of not having everything down perfectly. She suggested that we make signs that businesses could post, which would say: **We are patient with English learners. Feel free to practice!**

Having struggled to learn a foreign language in a foreign land before, I can personally attest that proficiency in a new tongue only comes through practice, and I appreciate Susan's suggestion. I have worked with our staff to create these simple signs, that any business or organization can download and print from our website that says not only in English, but in Spanish, Vietnamese, Tongan, Somali, and Bosnian, **We are patient with English learners. Feel free to practice!**

I invite all who would like to post one of these signs in their establishment to visit englishwvc.org and download, print, and post one of these signs. Encourage your employees and customers to be supportive of those practicing their English. There are thousands of refugees and immigrants in our city who would benefit by practicing their English, and we will be a stronger city if we support them. Let us be patient with thick accents, let us not laugh at mispronounced words, let us never ridicule someone struggling to learn English. But rather, let us be patient with these students of our language, let us encourage them to practice, let us applaud them as they succeed. Because this is West Valley City, and here we speak English!

Let's talk about the budget for a moment. Like each of you, we, as a city, have been affected by the Great Recession and have had to make difficult decisions to make ends meet. Yet, despite sales tax revenues down 17%, the city was able to balance the budget without any layoffs and pay off the debt on the West Ridge Golf Course and City Hall this past year. We made over \$8,000,000 in principal reduction payments in 2010 as we paid down the city debt. All employees—including elected officials—took a week without pay to help make it all happen. We also eliminated vacant positions, delayed hiring when possible, reduced benefits, and cut operational budgets. If only our federal government were as fiscally responsible as West Valley City!

We have some amazing employees doing some amazing things with tighter budgets than ever. Consider, just in 2010:

- ☐ We reduced our backlog of outstanding arrest warrants by 11,000 (out of 13,870)
- ☐ We have 78 active and registered neighborhood groups our staff has cultivated

- ☐ Through neighborhood services program, helped youth groups plan, and complete 10 community service projects
- ☐ Our National Night Out Against Crime program was recognized for the 7th consecutive year by the National Association of Town Watch as a National Leader for communities our size.
- ☐ 75,000 attendees for programs and activities at the UCCC
- ☐ 1,402 pet adoptions at the animal shelter last year
- ☐ 18 years in a row receiving Gov't Finance Officer's Association (GFOA) certificate of achievement and distinguished budget award for accuracy and transparency
- ☐ Maintain 22 parks
- ☐ 18,990 people reserved and used park pavilions
- ☐ 20,161 seniors use the senior center (9% increase)
- ☐ 433,496 used the fitness center (10% increase)
- ☐ Repaired 11,264 linear feet of sidewalk and 1,114 of gutter (replacement or grinding)
- ☐ Plowed 25,341 miles of snow last year
- ☐ Swept 12,295 miles of streets
- ☐ Replaced 2,442 broken garbage cans
- ☐ Completed 12,175 fleet repair/maintenance work orders
- ☐ Reduced graffiti and code enforcement violations to record lows
- ☐ Fire goal of 6 minute response time, average 5.75 mins

Let's give a round of applause to our tremendous city employees who have worked so hard and sacrificed so much. Now a word about our top notch police department:

- ☐ Although rapes and arsons were up slightly in 2010, consider every other category of crime dropped last year:
 - Aggravated Assaults down 2%
 - Motor vehicle theft down 3%
 - Theft & larceny down 5%
 - Burglaries down 6%
 - Robberies down 11%
 - Homicides down 25%
- ☐ This marks four straight years of overall crime declining in West Valley City, and five straight years of gang crime declining. In fact, police calls at the Valley Fair Mall are half of what they were two years ago, yet traffic there is up 57%. West Valley City today is the safest it has been in years!

Yet although crime is down, unfortunately, so are our sales tax receipts. Yet, there is a light at the end of the tunnel because of the solid performance of our economic development team. In city government parlance we easily throw around the term "economic development", but when

you get to the heart of what it means, it is really “job development.” It has been an amazing year for job development in our city, and enormous credit goes to our city manager Wayne Pyle and the Community and Economic Development Department. Consider these achievements from the past twelve months:

- ☐ After 12 years of searching for a naming rights sponsor, the city found the perfect fit as the E Center became the Maverik Center, bringing in much needed revenue.
- ☐ Our redevelopment agency is enabling Hexcel to add two new lines at this world class composite manufacturer. This is a \$34M addition and will create 85 new well paying jobs.
- ☐ Green River Capital - This company relocated to West Valley when they outgrew their previous location. They occupy a previously vacant 50,000 square foot building, did \$1M in remodel to the building and have 210 employees. They plan to grow in 3-5 years to 400 employees and were just named one of the top 3 fastest growing companies in Utah.
- ☐ Advanced H2O is a new company to Utah, and we worked with state leaders to bring their 55 employees and \$10M of investment to our city. Kirkland Brand bottled water from Costco and other notable brands will soon be bottled right here in West Valley at Advanced H2O.
- ☐ Backcountry.com was just honored as one of the fastest growing businesses in Utah, and rather than see them leave their facility in our city, we worked with them to consolidate their other operations from around the county right here. The 250 employees they had in West Valley will soon be joined by 200 more.
- ☐ Intermountain Bobcat outgrew their old location, and so we attracted them to our city. They are building a new \$3M building to house their 50 employees and \$10M a year in sales.
- ☐ A new \$12M office building for the Department of Homeland Security is being built in our Lake Pointe office park and will employ over 200 people.
- ☐ Harmons, which is headquartered here in West Valley City, continues to grow their business with new stores throughout the west. They also just completed a \$2M remodel of their store on 3500 S.

- Cardinal Health was outgrowing their space in West Valley, but we couldn't let them leave. Instead, our team helped meet their growth needs and they now have 80 employees and do \$10M in local retail sales from their site.
- Later this month we will break ground at the first hotel in the Lake Park Corporate Center, Home2 Suites by Hilton. This is a \$6M investment in our community that will generate \$4M a year in sales.
- Last week we approved a redevelopment area along the Granger Crossings area of 3500 South that will enable Decker Lake Plaza and Green Papaya Plaza to move forward with \$3.5M of remodeling.
- And of course, we have all enjoyed watching Phase 2 of the Valley Fair Mall redevelopment unfold. This phase included development of the plaza and the surrounding retail stores and represents a \$20M investment that will result in 300 new jobs and \$25M in new retail sales. New stores in this phase include Ross, Rue 21, In-N-Out Burger, Petco, NYPD Pizza, and Café Zupas, with Famous Footwear and The Children's Place opening up soon. The Valley Fair Mall expansion is the second largest retail project in the state after City Creek.
- So, while some communities are seeing businesses close up or move, West Valley City saw a 9% increase in businesses last year. There are now 5,481 licensed businesses in the city.

Without question, West Valley City's economic development efforts have been the most outstanding in the state of Utah in 2010. A tremendous foundation has been built for the post-recession environment. With TRAX light rail coming this August, the mall expansion rolling forward, and with the finest staff in the state hard at work, we are poised to see the city center of West Valley City transform over the next few years. This will be the legacy of this generation of elected officials and city employees—a once in a lifetime opportunity of creating a downtown worthy of Utah's second largest city.

But the successes of 2010 are not enough. We must continue to send a strong message to the development, real estate, and business communities that West Valley City is open for business. The way we will grow our tax base in the economic recovery is not from the government creating jobs, but from our private sector partners, like those just listed, creating jobs. We need to do all we can as a government to be responsible with the tax burden on employers and

to encourage their innovation, expansion, and hiring. I look forward to meeting with the members of the City Council and city management in the weeks ahead as we begin to craft our upcoming budget. This group has always been responsible, and we pledge to you that we will be prudent in the decisions we make at this critical time.

In conclusion, I am optimistic about the future of our city. In a time of mistrust and ethical challenges for many governments, residents here can take great pride in a well run city, staffed with honest, hard working and talented employees. In a time when communities are torn apart with divisions, we are working on coming together. In a time when most cities around the country are dealing with a drought in new development, we are still celebrating at ground breakings and ribbon cuttings.

And the best is yet to come. 2011 will be the year when our unity, pride, and progress as a city reaches new heights. May God continue to bless us as we build and protect our first class city.